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Demystifying government AI: Debunking the top eight myths

AI holds the potential to revolutionize government agency operations, empower the public sector workforce and uncover insights for solving some of our biggest societal challenges. However, reservations and concerns about AI persist—often rooted in misconceptions about the technology. Up to now, AI has come with linear improvements. We've become accustomed to advancements such as looking at our phones to unlock them.

Generative AI has been the catalyst to significant leaps in progress over a short period of time, contributing to the fear and confusion surrounding the technology. To extract mission value from AI in a responsible way, we have to collectively start separating fact from fiction.

Here are eight myths about AI, along with the surprising reality of each:

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Myth: Generative AI calls the shots.

AI is not an omnipotent decision-maker. It's a valuable addition to our toolbox. It's an incredibly broad category of technology that spans simple rule-based systems to intricate neural networks. Still, deploying an AI chatbot to field critical veterans' health inquiries raises far more pronounced risk considerations than employing AI for basic contract reviews. There is simply greater sensitivity surrounding the use of personally identifiable information and health records. That's why humans can—and should—still make the final decisions.

Myth: AI will replace humans.

Human decision-making is essential to the success of AI outcomes. In fact, Gartner ***predicts*** that by 2025, two million net new jobs will be created through human-machine partnerships. Instead of replacing people, AI can serve as a trusted copilot, or a "transformational intern," for every knowledge worker. After training, instruction and practice, AI models can help personnel perform at higher levels and have greater impact for your organization.

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Myth: Generative AI isn't accurate.

Generative AI solutions are trained to understand how humans use language, and through grounding with trusted data sources, these solutions become smarter. There have been instances where generative AI produced wildly inaccurate results, commonly called hallucinations. Processes such as ***"grounding"*** feed in trusted data that may not have been available when the model was trained. This can mitigate irrelevant responses. AI is just math—an algorithm based on how we use language—and these systems are more reliable when they are paired with trusted data sources.

Myth: My data trains generative AI models.

Publicly available generative AI tools, like ChatGPT, are trained on vast datasets, often containing a wide range of information from the internet. The system's responses are based on the knowledge and patterns it has learned during its training phase. Most enterprise AI solutions have built-in security measures, meaning your data is your data.

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Myth: My prompts will become public.

AI inputs are not visible to the public. Generative AI models are stateless—they don't change or learn based on prompts. Some leading companies in the market have made significant investments to build and deploy AI in a responsible and ethical manner. Enterprise solutions should encompass security measures to ensure that any activity using AI is protected—a notion that is especially important to public sector missions where sensitive information is used.

Myth: Existing risk-mitigation standards don't apply to AI.

AI compliance does not have to be built from scratch. For example, the ***FedRAMP*** (Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program) and ***NIST RMF*** standards contain components that can serve as a fantastic foundation for ensuring secure and responsible AI deployment. Today, there is an enormous opportunity to move forward with low-risk use cases, such as self-service help desks and document reviews, while higher-risk applications continue to be evaluated, tested and improved.

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Myth: Enterprise-grade AI doesn't exist.

Enterprise AI uses AI and machine learning to produce predictive results and solve problems. Generative AI, on the other hand, focuses on producing content, whether that's text, visuals, or code. Enterprise AI is built-in to software that supports specific types of operations, from making transportation more efficient to improving ***healthcare diagnoses.*** Enterprise AI relies heavily on structured data. Also, AI embedded in enterprise solutions is protected by many of the same security and privacy controls that are included within those platforms.

Myth: AI will solve the world's problems on its own.

The reality is that AI is still quite a ways away from determining defense strategies or other strategic work on its own. This technology should empower human decisions and drive creativity and efficiency. Humans are still very much needed to guide and verify the AI's output. Ultimately, "human-in-the-loop" is essential to successfully harness AI for real mission impact.

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The fear of AI is understandable given its rapid advancement, but it's not insurmountable. Fear often stems from the unknown, so by understanding AI, dispelling myths and actively participating in responsible use, government agencies can pave the way for a future where AI drives growth in innovation.

So, are you ready to overcome the misconceptions surrounding AI and confidently step into the future? The choice is yours, and the possibilities are limitless.

To learn more about how AI can accelerate your mission and applications of generative AI technologies in the public sector, start with ***"Decoding AI: A government perspective learning series."***

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